The Reluctant She-Wolf

Kate Hodge finds the plight of being a horror actress almost as bad as the dilemma of her TV lycanthrope character.

By LYNNE STEPHENS

She-Wolf of London is now called *Love and Curses*, and its star (with new Bryan Moore makeup) isn't happy about losing the title status.

Leatherface disappointed the fans, but perhaps no one was as unhappy about it as its lead actress.

Photos: Copyright New Line

Kate Hodge never set out to be a horror heroine. Although Hodge's first big-screen starring role was in *Leatherface: Texas Chainsaw Massacre III*, Hodge feels no attraction to the genre.

"I don't like horror at all," says Hodge over a lunch of vegetables at the Bristol, England set of her current television series *She-Wolf of London*. "When horror is funny, it's all right, but I don't like out-and-out Freddy Krueger stuff. I was never one to say, 'Oh God, let's go see that scary movie.'" Hodge prefers "really silly movies, or love stories—basically anything but horror."

The Orinda, California native originally dreamed of a career in ballet, "but when I was 16, I decided not to be a ballerina. I thought I was over the hill. So I decided to go to college." While enrolled at UCLA as a drama major, Hodge won a scholarship to France's world-renowned Marcel Marceau Institute and spent 11 months there, studying mime, dance, fencing and acrobatics.

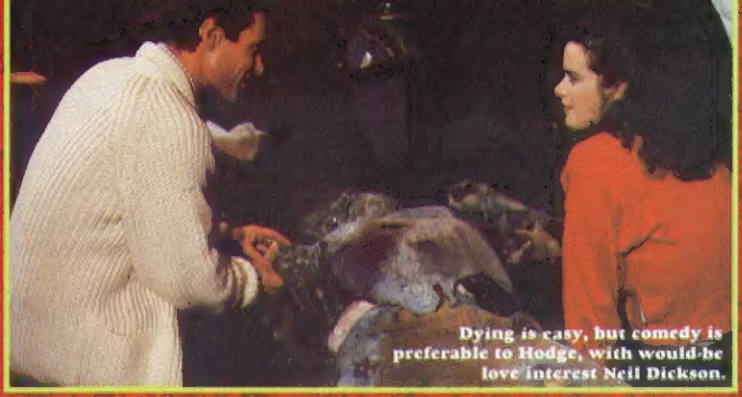
Not surprisingly, Hodge doesn't exactly embrace the title "scream queen." "I *love* it! It's my *dream*," she laughs sarcastically. "Well, I'm proud of my scream, but I don't want to be known for it." And establishing her early dramatic reputation

in horror "wasn't something I did on purpose."

But, while acknowledging the threat of typecasting, Hodge considers herself fortunate to have captured the leading role in *She-Wolf of London*, a series that contains its share of creepy-crawlies and things that do more than go bump in the night. "It was a lucky break for me," admits Hodge. "I had done two other jobs, really—*Tales from the Crypt* ["Dead Right"] and *Leatherface*."

The *She-Wolf* executives at both Universal and the show's production company, Finnegan Pinchuk, "were really worried that I didn't have enough experience," remembers Hodge. "But I kept insisting, 'I can do it, I can do it!' " Hodge eventually won the role of Randi Wallace, a graduate student in mythology who learns the hard way that there's more to those myths and legends than smug textbook explanations.

At the beginning of the series, Randi travels to England to study mythology under the tutelage of London University professor Ian Matheson (played by Neil Dickson). "She's actually trying to prove that mythology is all a bunch of psychological nonsense, something people make up so they can disperse their fears in fantasy," Hodge explains. While camping on the English moors under a full moon, Randi receives a vicious attack from some large animal. After a short hospital stay, she returns to her studies and attempts to put the horrifying experience behind her. But during the next full moon, Randi transforms into a half-woman, half-beast "she-wolf" and almost succeeds in devouring Ian—who swiftly revises his own long-held opinions on werewolf "legends."



Dying is easy, but comedy is preferable to Hodge, with would-be love interest Neil Dickson.

Together, Ian and Randi resolve to reverse Randi's werewolf curse, which causes her to "wolf out" once every full moon. "They put an ad in the paper, and anybody who knows anything about supernatural happenings can call—maybe they can find a cure that way," Hodge elaborates. "That's how it all starts. Now people come to us with occult problems that sometimes have nothing to do with werewolves."

> "*She-Wolf* is not about a monster. Randi doesn't sit in a chair and say, 'I want to be the she-wolf and kill someone.'"

Hodge sees a strong similarity between *She-Wolf* and its closest predecessor, the 1981 film *An American Werewolf in London*. "It's got the same black comedy, drama and action." And, like *American Werewolf*, "*She-Wolf* is about a *normal* person—or what *used* to be a normal girl. It's not about a monster," insists Hodge. "She has a problem, but she's not evil. Randi doesn't sit in a chair and say, 'OK, I want to be a she-wolf, and I want to go out and kill someone.' She doesn't kill people—she kills rabbits. So there are all these dead rabbits lying around after she's been out."

Randi's transformation into the she-wolf occurs in three distinct stages. First, Randi develops "a furry face, and then a furry face with yellow eyes and fangs," Hodge details. "The third stage is a prosthetic wolf mask [designed by FX wizard Christopher Tucker]. "Until stage three, Randi's clothes don't change. They become a bit ripped, and fur comes out a little bit. In the third stage, she wears a furry top that kind of comes down to a little G-string, and she has brown furry legs." Because of the amount of time needed to apply the prosthetics and makeup, Hodge normally plays the actual she-wolf only through the second stage. Another actress, Dianne Youdale, endures the complete two-hour makeup process to portray the fully-furred beast.

Despite the exhausting schedule, Hodge enjoys the *She-Wolf* experience. "It's a general rule that every company is different, but with this crew, it's great," she enthuses. "Everybody just clicks. There are no big egos going around. Neil Dickson is fantastic; he's done a lot, he's much more established, but there's no attitude or anything."

Operating under a tight shooting schedule (eight days per episode), the *She-Wolf* actors and the director

After overcoming Egyptian evil, Randi will face the terror of a potential nude scene.

She-Wolf Photos: Copyright 1990 MCA-TV

This is how Hodge would prefer to be known: attractive, radiant, and not a set of fangs or a chainsaw in sight.

work quickly to block out and rehearse each scene before capturing it on celluloid. While shooting the episode "She-Devil," Hodge, Dickson and director Dennis Abey bandy about suggestions for specific bits of business in a humorous scene that takes place in Ian's university office. After a few run-throughs, Abey dismisses Dickson to the makeup trailer for the application of a variety of nasty-looking welts and bleeding scars (in the scene, Ian has just experienced a run-in with the she-devil), leaving Hodge a few minutes to relax before the scene is committed to film.

"*Leatherface* was shot in six weeks, and then it was over," recalls Hodge. "This is our 90th working day. This is constant—it never ends. It's six days a week, usually from 7 in the morning until 8 at night."

Late nights aside, Hodge does enjoy the series' increasing demands on her comedic talents. Co-supervising producers and *She-Wolf* writers Lee Goldberg and William Rabkin (both former FANGORIA contributors), who joined the series after the first few episodes had been filmed, broadened the series' scope to embrace more fantastical scenarios—and humor—after "testing" Dickson and Hodge in the episode "Moonlight Becomes You." "We wanted to see if they could do humor," says Goldberg. "If they blew it in that episode, we'd know their capabilities. But they did it so well that we've been going in that direction ever since."

Hodge is all for the series' new plotlines. "Lee Goldberg and William Rabkin have really spiced them up," she praises. "The most outrageous things happen on the show. In the last one, I was in love with a devil who ran a circus, who had the power to stop me from transforming into a werewolf."

In another episode, entitled "Can't Keep a Dead Man Down," Randi's American ex-fiancé travels to London to reclaim her affections shortly before Ian is killed and resurrected as a zombie by the chairman of his university's mythology department. "So now I'm juggling an ex-boyfriend and a zombie who is my best friend," laughs Hodge. "The boyfriend is staying at Ian's parents' bed and breakfast, Ian wants to eat my ex-fiancé, and I have to drag him out of the room. It's just insane—because it's become completely unreal now."

"[This new direction] is the only way it can stay exciting for the audience," continues Hodge. "Otherwise, if it's always me with the serious problem of a werewolf, it's going to be really boring. They'll go, 'Oh, God, she's crying about being a werewolf again.' But if it's kind of wacky and offbeat, it can maybe become a cult-type show, which can endure."

Hodge is less thrilled with other aspects of the series. "This show gets very violent. It doesn't need it," she frowns, although both she and the show's writers indicate there will be a toning down of violent acts in future episodes. Also, the morning after a full moon, Randi returns to human form and consciousness *without* clothing. "It's always a problem trying to shoot around that," complains Hodge. "I have fits about not letting things show."

Hodge vows to never become a prisoner of the genre.

Hodge recalls a situation where Randi "was left in a field, but it was a long shot with a body stocking. That time, Ian had a coat that he put on me. And I woke up in a factory once, with sacks around that I could pull over me. But there has been a situation where I was strapped to an altar, about to be sacrificed, and there was nothing to grab and cover myself with because I was chained up. That was *tricky*!"

Along with the addition of humor and the subtraction of nudity, the lead characters have also been altered since the series' first episode. "It's more like *Moonlighting* now, like *Remington Steele*," says Goldberg.

"In the beginning Randi was very timid—well, not *timid*, but he *was* the professor," says Hodge. Now, "I'll hit him and yell at him, and we scream at each other, so we've gotten much more comfortable with each other, which makes sense."

Romantic sparks do fly between professor and student, but Hodge asserts that nothing will ever happen. Although the undercurrent of attraction adds another layer to the series, the characters have yet to overtly develop that aspect of their relationship. "And I don't think they should," asserts Hodge. "That's how it's supposed to be." The actress prefers to focus on the comedic moments between the two. "Comedy is easy to do with Neil," says Hodge of her English co-star, who may be best known to American audiences from his days as Gavin Maurier on *Dynasty*. "We're very relaxed with each other, and can bounce ideas off of each other."

Hodge is less certain of the relationship between *She-Wolf* and its American audience. "I'm so far removed from what's happening and how the response has been. I think people will find it fun. It's fun to make and that shows. On some episodes it's definitely a 'happy' show, but I guess you can never tell." Should the series fail, Hodge speculates that "the next script I get sent will be *Teen Wolf 6*, or something like that. Or *She-Wolf—The Movie*. It'll never end," she groans.

Hodge's experiences while filming *Leatherface* solidified her early dis-

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CONTRIBUTORS' CRYPT

Larry Barsky designed the poster for AIP's *Soultaker*. **Jami Bernard** covers the French horror film *Baby Blood* in a future GOREZONE. **Doug Brod** hated *Edward Scissorhands*. **Bill George** wrote *Eroticism in the Fantasy Cinema*. **David Kuehls** made two visits to the *Dark Half* set. Ask **Linda Marotta** what she wanted to call her women authors article. **Maitland McDonagh** is writing a book on Dario Argento. The fiction of **Wayne Allen Sallee** appears in *Splatterpunks*. **Marc Shapiro** covers *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* in future issues. **Lynne Stephens** contributes to STARLOG. **Steve Swires** interviews Dyanne Thorne in GOREZONE #19.

THINGS TO COME

The next time we join you, Memorial Day will be around the corner—but we're not here to dwell on the past, right? Look into horror's future in Fango #103!

To get a new perspective on our favorite genre, we'll be talking to some of the most important people behind the scenes in horror today—not directors, writers or FX men, but the producers and executives who wield the real power in Hollywood. We've chatted with a half dozen or so who have been the most instrumental in getting genre fare on the screen, and they'll give us their views on where the genre is headed. You won't want to miss what may be the most important article we've ever run!

One group determined to make a dent in the scream scene, of course, is Fangoria Films. Our production **CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT** is poised to be the first vampire film of the coming bloodsucker boom out of the gate, and from what we've seen, it looks like a darn good one, too. Join us for an exclusive first look. Then there's the return of the Antichrist, and in **OMEN IV—THE AWAKENING**, the little devil is a girl. This Fox Broadcasting production is the first in a planned series of TV terror titles, and we'll be bringing you the inside scoop.

Also on tap is the first part of our **Paul Naschy** video guide, a look at the latest monster model kits and plenty of news, reviews and previews to slake your thirst. It's a fascinating peek at terror's future: **FANGORIA #103!**

ON SALE: MAY 14

SHE-WOLF

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taste for horror. *Leatherface*'s company were "good people, but the actual script and story were disgusting. It was really awful. Not written poorly—just the concept. You know, being tortured and chopped up and watching people get killed.

"It wasn't fun, but it was funny, because it got ridiculous. It was so over-the-top violent and disgusting that it was actually unbelievable that people made these movies," she grimaces.

Hodge recalls having to reshoot *Leatherface*'s ending after the film's completion. "It didn't make any sense [originally]. I wake up in the desert and start laughing, and that was the end. It was really stupid."

Although Hodge's character, Michelle, and her companions succeed in dispatching the sadistic members of Leatherface's clan during the course of the film, in the revised ending the family returns to life to partake in even more grotesqueries against Michelle, who must kill them all *again*. "Which is a happier ending," adds Hodge, "but, again, it doesn't make any sense. This guy [Ken Foree] gets his head chopped off in a pond, but at the end of the movie he goes, 'Hey, Michelle, I'm here to save you.' Oh man, he really *was* a tough guy!"

Hodge found the offshoots of horror fame disconcerting as well after completing *Leatherface*. "I went to these conventions. It was *horrifying*. All these little kids buying the most gruesome things—knives and daggers. I just found it amazing. There are these 13-year-olds who pay so much money to get there, across the country, and then they pay hundreds of dollars for pieces of Freddy Krueger's face. It's just weird.

"One of the guest artists [on *She-Wolf*] said, 'Pretty soon they're going to have *She-Wolf* conventions. And they'll have *She-Wolf* dolls and all that stuff.' And this huge nightmare started breeding in my head. *She-Wolf conventions*! I just hope I can get out of [the genre]—I really do."

Should the series prove a long-running success, and should Hodge eventually wish to disassociate herself from her role, "Randi Wallace will have to get out a gun and shoot herself. Happy? It's on celluloid, I'm dead, I'm not coming back."

But as Hodge's experiences in the genre have taught her, being dead usually poses few problems for sequels. So, if Hodge truly wishes to make an end of it, she'd better make sure Randi's bullets are silver.

STEELE

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a week. He wrote it in a day; we had a day of preproduction, and he shot it in three days. Isn't that amazing? One night I slept on the set, because I knew we would be shooting again in four hours. He kept his horse. That was *The Ghost*."

When she returned to acting in the '70s, she made *They Came From Within* for David Cronenberg. "What an ordeal that was," she groans. "It was disgusting. I don't know what they used for that creeping ectoplasm. Oh dear me! I felt tremendously resentful, enormously humiliated, that I had all this garbage around me [in the bathtub scene]. I probably looked at David Cronenberg with this terrible rage that he didn't deserve. He's a very good director now, don't you think? You feel the content [of his movies] is very personal to him; it's not arbitrary at all."

As for *Piranha* and Joe Dante, Steele, as many actors do, says Dante "is a lovely man. I'd love to work for him again. I didn't do all that much, but I really liked him. There's something so accessible and human and sweet about him."

Few could argue with Steele's contention that female roles in horror movies are underwritten, and that the strongest parts are those of villainesses. "To play a villain is always much easier, in a strange way, because you're focused so strongly," Steele opines. "They always have a point of view, those roles, whereas the victim is more passive and less powerful. In terms of eroticism, basically, the public wants to see men fang people; a male vampire is more erotic and moving than a female. It's going back to the whole Freudian thing, with the female as a kind of passive being and the male as the active creature."

The essence of the vampire is seduction, a point Steele applauds. "So you could make a vampire movie with a strong female character, but at the same time, she has a down side, a cheap side, as opposed to the highly romantic, Byronesque aspects that men bring to those roles."

Steele's intensity and exotic beauty on screen often have inspired wildly rhapsodic descriptions from writers, such as Raymond Durgnat's claim that "she's the only girl whose eyelids snarl." It's a line Steele loves. "It's not me they're seeing," she concludes. "They're casting some projection of themselves, some aspect that I somehow symbolize. It can't possibly be me."